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What do we expect of school principals? Congruence between principal evaluation and performance standards

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This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of content analysis to examine principal evaluation instruments and state and professional standards for principals in school districts located in a mid-Atlantic state in the USA. The purposes of this study were to (a) determine the degrees of emphasis that are placed upon leadership and management behaviours expected of school principals, (b) explore the congruence of principal evaluation instruments with instructional leadership and management attributes and (c) explore the congruence of principal evaluation instruments with state and professional standards. Findings revealed that a school district focus on instructional leadership, organisational management and community relations in principal evaluation instruments reflected common expectations of principals among school districts and state and professional standards.

Introduction

Contemporary principals and headmasters find themselves juggling competing tasks on a day-to-day basis. This juggling act is the result of efforts to satisfy demands from both internal and external stakeholders of educational organisations. From the national level to the local community, administrators, teachers, parents and community members scrutinise the performance of schools (Tyack and Cuban 1995, Langer and Boris-Schacter 2003, Thomas et al. 2003). This scrutiny forces building principals[1] to be responsive to multiple demands. If all stakeholders demand the same outcomes by the same methods at the same time, then the job of a school principal is simplified. However, more often than not the demands are different and may even be at odds with one another. For example, state departments of education demand that schools meet accountability standards that are developed at the state level and distributed to schools for implementation. The state messages are loud and clear, that schools should focus primarily on instructional effectiveness in order to achieve predetermined benchmarks for academic standards (Glidden 1999). On the other hand, public messages, illuminated by the media, indicate that schools should also pay attention to violence prevention, bullying and the emotional needs of their students (Garsten and Buckley 1999, Price 1999). Additionally, the increased

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scrutiny for improved academic performance applies pressure on schools to focus on the cognitive aspect of schooling, conflicting with the additional demand to focus on students' emotional needs (Shortt *et al.* 2001).

Building level administrators are ultimately held responsible for numerous educational outcomes. And, in the light of the complexity of their jobs, Glasman and Heck (1992) indicated that there is a need to examine evaluation in determining the effectiveness of principals. Although various authors have explored models of evaluation (Glasman and Heck 1992, Glasman and Martens 1992, Stufflebeam and Nevo 1993, Heck and Marcoulides 1996), little attention has been given to the internal evaluation instruments used to scrutinize the performance of building level principals. In recent years, however, the inattention to principal evaluation and standards of performance has given way to complex, and often competing, principal performance standards emanating from national, state and local governing bodies. To illustrate, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) developed standards for school leaders nationally (Murphy 2001), the Virginia Standards of Accreditation (2000) also established performance standards for principals at the state level, and localities followed with attempts to standardise the work of principals through the development of evaluation instruments.

It is important to note that the ISLLC Standards have received criticism by some scholars. Anderson (2001) and English (2003) expressed concern that the ISLLC Standards reflect a business-oriented model that values efficiency and technical skills as means for improving student performance without considering contextual differences that influence outcomes for students. In addition, English's criticism asserted that the standards are untested and unvalidated and as such do not provide a good basis for determining the best means for improving schools (English 2003). Anderson (2002) noted that focusing the standards on instructional leadership is positive. However, due to a lack of validity in the standards themselves, basing a test for school leaders on the standards may not be appropriate (Anderson 2002, English 2003).

Related to the issues noted above regarding the competing interests among various accrediting and governing bodies in promulgating principal performance standards, the purposes of this study were to determine the degrees of emphasis that are placed upon leadership and management behaviours expected of school principals and to explore the congruence of principal evaluation instruments with instructional leadership and management attributes.

Background

Mintzberg (1979) offered a conceptual framework for examining the way in which organisations are structured. Organisations monitor and control work through five coordinating mechanisms: (a) mutual adjustment; (b) direct supervision; (c) standardisation of work; (d) standardisation of output; (e) standardisation of skills. Three of the mechanisms in this framework are particularly apropos in consideration of the current focus of national, state

and local standards. They include standardisation of work, standardisation of output and standardisation of skills. Since it is difficult for schools to standardise inputs, standardisation is accomplished through national, state and local standards. National and state standards strive to standardise the work of principals. Locally, school districts develop evaluation instruments in an effort to standardise the skills of principals. Nationally and at the state level the effort to standardise outputs is reflected in mandated testing programmes that set specific output benchmarks to determine if schools achieve accreditation status or meet annual progress requirements (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

The changing role of the school principal

Leadership studies from the 1950s (see, for example, Getzels and Guba 1957) and continuing into the 1970s (see, for example, Fiedler 1967, Burns 1978) explored the behaviours exhibited by leaders in various organisations. The first theories resulted in the concept that leadership behaviours could be classified into two major categories of (a) consideration, viewed as warm supportive concern for subordinates, and (b) initiating structure, which is the manner in which leaders structure their own roles and the roles of their subordinates. In the early 1970s emerging theory proposed the concept that leader effectiveness was contingent upon leader–member relations, the degree to which subordinates tasks are routine and the ability to deliver rewards and sanctions to subordinates. Other concepts of leadership proposed the theory that leadership style was situational, depending upon the maturity of the subordinate group (Ubben & Hughes 1997). For the past two decades scholars of leadership theory have attempted to define types of leadership to include: (a) instructional leadership; (b) facilitative leadership; (c) transformational leadership; (d) visionary leadership; (e) leadership for school culture; (f) curriculum leadership (DuFour and Eaker 1987, Liontos 1992, Drury 1993, Lashway 1995a&b, 1996, Blase and Blase 1998, Checkley 2000).

When concepts of instructional leadership first emerged it was viewed as top-down supervision and evaluation of teachers, curriculum and school programmes. This view required school principals to be technically adept while focusing upon the school's academic mission by setting goals, examining curriculum, evaluating teachers and assessing results. Contemporary views of instructional leadership require leaders to maintain a similar focus while working collaboratively with teachers to accomplish a similar academic mission (Brubaker *et al.* 1993, Lashway 1995a&b, Ubben and Hughes 1997, Blase and Blase 1998).

Initially, job expectations for school principals required limited responsibility for the academic programmes in their school. Their primary responsibility was to effectively manage school operations by attending to facility issues such as scheduling and building maintenance (Fredericks and Brown 1993). This role was later expanded when responsibility for the academic programme was added to their list of duties (DuFour and Eaker 1987,

Stronge 1993, Shen and Hsieh 1999). Principals were then viewed as instructional leaders in their buildings. Today, principals perform a balancing act in order to respond effectively to the numerous demands of multiple constituencies. As a result, new perspectives have emerged regarding what it means to be a school principal in charge of leading a school. Management-focused theories of school leadership have lost favour and leadership-driven theories have emerged to replace, or perhaps absorb, them (Liontos 1992, Lashaway 1995a&b, 1996).

Since the early 1990s public schools have, again, experienced increased scrutiny by many stakeholders. While most of the stakeholders that criticise schools are external to school organisations, internal stakeholders also hold a vested interest in the outcomes of public schooling (Stolp 1994). This increased scrutiny by stakeholders has simultaneously heightened demands for school improvement. Ultimately, school principals are charged with leading school improvement efforts in their institutions (Kearns and Harvey 2001).

Practicing school principals interact with supervisors, teachers, parents and students within an organisational structure loosely tied together. Principals work to balance the competing needs of each of these constituencies by responding to problems and needs that are unpredictable. A principal's effectiveness is indirectly influenced by the perceptions that these stakeholders hold regarding his/her job performance (Blase and Blase 1998). Contextually based issues determine the mode of principal response. Should it be manager, disciplinarian, visionary, facilitator, transformer, instructional expert or all of the above? Cascadden (1998) wrote about a sense of conflict as the principal strove to fulfil his or her leadership role to focus on vision and school improvement while faced with the need to attend to an endless stream of management responsibilities.

Bombarded with multiple theories of leadership and management, school principals will likely experience a significant amount of role conflict and role overload as they work to fulfil the perceptions of what they are expected to accomplish, and how. Role conflict has the potential to impact a principal's effectiveness. In addition, external forces for improved student outcomes may cause role strain as principals strive to exert greater control of instructional issues while simultaneously working to empower staff through increased shared governance. Scholars of leadership theory have fueled the debate regarding the distinctions between types of leadership, whether or not they are contextually driven and whether or not they are all present within a general leadership dimension of educational leadership (Stronge 1993).

The complexity and lack of clarity surrounding the role of a principal makes the formulation of appropriate performance assessment a daunting task. For example, when merely filtering the extant literature regarding the principal's roles and responsibilities, as of October 2003 the ERIC index listed 5217 journal articles and manuscripts if the descriptors 'Principals' and 'Leadership' were cross-referenced. This extensive listing consisted of many publications proposing differing conceptions of the role of the school principal, adding to the confusion of what actually constitutes this role.

Role expectations of principals

Expectations of school principals are often grounded in theoretical conceptions of leadership that compete with the day-to-day managerial functions associated with running a school. Good management requires consistency and assurance that daily operations will be handled fairly and expeditiously. It requires a systematic application of a variety of skills to ensure an orderly and efficient school environment (Ubben and Hughes 1997). The conflict between leadership and efficient management of schools is currently overshadowed by myriad definitions of leadership. Most theories of leadership view leadership as an influential process while perceptions of management imply an element of control. Management, broadly defined, means the organisation of people and processes to accomplish a goal (Park 1980).

Sociological definitions of a social role define it as rights and obligations attributed to a particular status, and define status as a person's position in society. Accompanying rights and obligations are expectations of what individuals should do according to their particular status (Scott and Schwartz 2000, Thio 2000).

Leaders are expected to provide their organisations with a sense of direction and a vision for the future (Sergiovanni and Starratt 1993, Kouzes and Posner 1995) while creating a sense of mission (Checkley 2000). Current definitions of leadership tend to emphasise vision, challenging people, shared purpose and inspiration (Liontos 1992, Lashaway 1995a&b, 1996).

Principals are expected to create change and develop policy while empowering others (Checkley 2000, Sergiovanni and Starratt 1993). Defining the role of the school principal is a difficult task due to a complex set of job responsibilities, skills necessary to perform the job and values. Scholars have portrayed the role of the principal in several ways: (a) as consisting of several functions (DuFour and Eaker 1987, Pajak and McAfee 1992, Rosenblatt and Somech 1998); (b) as approaches and characteristics (Rinehart *et al.* 1998); (c) as values (Winter *et al.* 1998); (d) as skills necessary to fulfil certain responsibilities (Clark 1995, Furtwengler and Furtwengler 1998, Herrity and Glasman 1999).

The standards movement clearly has increased the accountability of principals. Consequently, newly hired principals should possess the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the demands of such a multifaceted job. It is important that university programmes that prepare students for educational administration identify skills that school principals need in order to be effective principals. Shen and Hsieh (1999: 85) identified four skill areas of collaborative decision-making, managing the school, instructional leadership and understanding and improving skills. Within these areas 21 responsibilities were identified. For example, in the area of collaborative decision-making, maintaining a school climate that promotes growth was identified as a responsibility. In the area of instructional leadership, conducting staff development workshops and analysing teaching were identified as responsibilities. Furtwengler and Furtwengler (1998) identified skills to include: (a) strategic planning; (b) inquiry and information management; (c) day-to-day operations; (d) human relations skills; (e) financial management; (f) long-range planning; (g) strategies for

programme development; (h) staff development; (i) media relations; (j) community partnerships.

The changing world and nation exacerbate the complexity of the principal's role. Administrators must be educated to operate within and for culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Expert principals recommended that new administrators develop skills including knowledge of: (a) the rationale and theory of bilingual education; (b) second language acquisition; (c) bilingual instructional methodology; (d) organizational models and scheduling for bilingual instruction; (e) awareness of cultural norms and diversity issues; (f) pragmatics related to diversity (Herrity & Glasman 1999).

The Council of Chief State School Officers (1996) standards for leaders support a multifaceted view of the role of school principals. They began work in 1994 to redefine school leadership. It represents state, professional and university interests in school administration. The standards were based upon the literature on school improvement and effective school leadership. Members recognised changes that were central to redefining the leadership skills of school administrators. These changes included: (a) educators reflecting on traditional views of knowledge, intelligence, assessment and instruction; (b) increasing demands for conceptions of schooling that are community focused and caring centred; (c) parents and corporate and community leaders becoming increasingly more involved in education. Six standards emerged from the work of the ISLLC which indicated that a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by: (a) facilitating a shared vision; (b) promoting a school culture and instructional programme focused on growth for staff and students; (c) attending to management and day-to-day operations; (d) building relationships with families and the larger community; (e) acting in a fair and ethical manner; (f) responding to and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context. Members also felt that 'Standards should inform performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation of school leaders' (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996: 7). As noted earlier, English (2003) and Anderson (2001, 2002) expressed concern that the standards present a narrow view of school leadership and have not been tested or validated.

Principal evaluation

Logically, personnel evaluation systems should measure individuals' abilities to perform effectively (Stronge 1991). The bulk of the literature devoted to personnel evaluation has focused primarily upon the evaluation of teachers. Investigation of principal performance assessment has been limited (Duke 1992, Glasman and Heck 1992) and evaluation of administrators has been non-productive and ineffective in many districts (Conley 1987).

Principal evaluation requires standards to 'guide professional practice, hold the professionals accountable, and provide goals for upgrading the profession's services' (Stufflebeam and Nevo 1993: 37). Members of The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation developed the Personnel Evaluation Standards and adopted the proposition that all

evaluations should possess four basic attributes: (a) propriety standards; (b) utility standards; (c) feasibility standards; (d) accuracy standards. (Stufflebeam and Nevo 1993).

It is the contention of the authors that there are three key issues related to principal evaluation that deserve attention: (1) principals' performance evaluation should be fair and equitable; (2) principals' performance should be based upon what they are expected to do; (3) performance evaluation instruments should match the expectations framed within state and professional standards. Since clear agreement on what encompasses the role of a school principal is lacking, the task of principal evaluation becomes a challenging enterprise. In addition, differing assessment approaches are utilised to determine principal effectiveness. Assessment approaches include role-based, outcome-based, standards-based and structure-based formats (Glasman and Heck 1992). Rosenblatt and Somech (1998) questioned whether principals are evaluated against objective measures. Clearly, systematic study of school administrators' performance assessment is needed (Marcoulides and Heck 1993, Furtwengler and Furtwengler 1998).

Principal evaluation instruments provide a framework of expectations of principal performance. It is natural that principals would aspire to meet the job expectations framed within evaluation instruments. An analysis of principal evaluation instruments was used to determine the degree of emphasis that is placed upon instructional leadership and/or the degree to which evaluation instruments match state accreditation standards and professional standards for school principals. One would expect the orientation of evaluation instruments to push principals' behaviour towards the implicit values of the instrument and that evaluation instruments that emphasise instructional leadership would increase the emphasis of instructional leadership behaviours exhibited by practicing principals.

Study design

Target population

The target population for this study was the 132 school districts in the state of Virginia. Job descriptions and evaluation instruments from all Virginia school districts represented the total population to be studied.

Methods

The primary methodology employed in the study was content analysis. Text contained in principal evaluation instruments was analysed to determine areas of emphasis. Evaluation instruments are forms of written communication. The content of these documents convey messages from one individual or group to another individual or group. Content analysis is a systematic, objective and quantitative method of analysis designed to describe the content of communication messages (Gall *et al*. 1996) that uses a specific process to make valid inferences from text (Weber 1990).

Written communication is produced by a communicator and is consumed by a particular audience. Communication content expresses attitudes, interests, mores and values of a population. Inferences about a population are made on the basis of the content created for their consumption. A quantitative description of communication content is assumed to be meaningful. This implies that the frequency of occurrence of content characteristics is an important factor in the communication process (Bereleson 1952). The more frequently a unit appears infers a greater interest in the unit by the producer of the content (Rosengren 1981).

Qualitative researchers also study written communication in the form of documents and records. When viewing text from a qualitative perspective the researcher looks for meaning in the text itself. A qualitative researcher will study the author's purpose in writing the text, the intended and actual audience and the audience's reason for reading it (Gall *et al*. 1996).

The basic unit of text for this content analysis was the theme. Themes are useful recording units because the boundary of a theme describes a single idea. As a unit of text a theme should have only one subject, verb and object (Weber 1990, US General Accounting Office 1996). The themes analysed describe a single idea and consist of the principal as an agent of action (subject), the expected behaviour (verb) and the target of the behaviour (object). Statistical software was utilised to perform a content analysis of the text contained in evaluation instruments. The software was specifically designed to process textual information. The program allows comparison of word, keyword or category occurrences between text fields. Categories were programmed to cluster text around key descriptors consisting of verbs and nouns. The key descriptors matched with actual language contained in Virginia's Standards of Accreditation's (SOA) and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards descriptions of the role of the principal. Words with multiple meanings were coded to analyse only those words that were synonymous with language contained within the SOA or ISLLC standards.

The purposes of this study encompassed both quantitative and qualitative aspects of content analysis. Determining the degree to which evaluation instruments reflect instructional leadership and management attributes as identified in national (ISSLC) and state standards was an effort to explore the intentions of the author in writing the text contained in these documents.

Determination of categories. The present study proposed separate sets of categories applicable to the research questions to be investigated. Five of the categories developed were derived directly from the standards and investigated the congruency of evaluation instruments used to assess Virginia school principals with standards. Nine of the categories developed were derived directly from the Virginia Standards of Accreditation role responsibilities for school principals and investigated the congruency between these standards and evaluation instruments. Teacher training reflected language devoted to staff development focused upon improving student achievement, while keeper of teacher licensure records dealt only with maintaining records related to teacher licensure. A deliberate and careful effort was made to link categories with the research questions, making it unlikely that new or

different categories would be needed. However, it was possible that new themes would emerge from the data as they were analysed, and these could arise whenever single occurrences occurred within evaluation instruments (Arkin 1999).

Test coding. In order to ensure clarity of category definitions it is wise to code a small sample of the text. This will reveal any ambiguities in the rules and lead to insights for revision of the system of classification (Weber 1990). Asking a second person to apply the coding categories to sample text is useful to discover problems inherent in the coding scheme (Gall *et al.* 1996). For the purposes of this study a sample of 10 evaluation instruments was coded by the primary researcher and by a second coder in order to discover problems that may be inherent in the coding scheme. The test coding process consisted of four steps: (a) selection of a second coder knowledge-able about expectations of school principals; (b) training the second coder in the coding process; (c) test coding a small sample of documents with a goal of 80% consistency between coders; (d) if 80% consistency was obtained then stop the test coding process, if not test code 10 additional documents.

The results of the test coding were input into the content analysis software program that computed inter-rater agreements for 10 evaluation instruments. Three inter-rater agreement measures were obtained to assess the reliability of coding, which included: (a) free marginal adjustment; (b) Scott's π; (c) Cohen's κ. Free marginal adjustment assumes that all catego-ries on a given scale have equal probability of being observed. Scott's π does not assume that all categories have equal probability of being observed, however, it does assume that the distributions of the categories observed by the coders are equal. Cohen's κ does not assume that all categories have equal probability of being observed or that the distributions of the various categories are equal for all coders, but takes into account the differential tendencies or preferences of coders (Peladeau 1999).

Strong inter-rater agreement was established for the developed catego-ries of evaluation instruments. Test coding of evaluation instruments was organized according to the SOA and the ISLLC standards. The overall percentage agreement between coders was 88.6%, with Cohen's κ at 81.5%, Scott's π at 81.5% and free marginal adjustment at 86.4%.

Calculating frequencies. Content analyses typically make a frequency count of the occurrence of each category in each document sampled (Gall *et al.* 1996). Frequency counts make the assumption that the most frequently appearing categories reflect the greatest concerns and reveal changes and differences between documents (Weber 1990). These can be expressed in absolute frequencies, which are the number of occurrences found in the sample. They can also be expressed as relative frequencies, as a percent-age of the sample size. Inferences can be drawn from uniform distribu-tions, particularly when the frequency in one category is larger or smaller than the average for all categories (Krippendorff 1980). This allows the application of non-parametric tests of significance to determine whether the frequency counts are distributed differently in different samples (Gall *et al.* 1996).

This study used a content analysis program to filter principal evaluation instruments according to the previously described categories (Peladeau 1999). The content analysis program conducted frequency counts of the occurrence of the defined categories. These frequency counts were used to determine the focus of attention in principal evaluation instruments.

Results

A total of 100 evaluation instruments were received from 97 school districts. Evaluation instruments were overwhelmingly designated as designed for all principals, representing 97% of the evaluation instruments received. Five evaluation instruments designated the level of principal. Two were designed for elementary principals, one was designed for middle school principals and two were designed for high school principals.

Principal standards and principal evaluation instruments: comparative analysis

The ISLLC standards were used to develop five categories for analysis that included: (a) facilitation of vision; (b) instructional programme; (c) responsibilities related to organisational management; (d) responsibilities related to community relations; (e) language that addressed responsibility to the larger society. Language related to the responsibility to act with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner was non-existent in the evaluation instruments, therefore this category was not included in the analysis. A content analysis of evaluation instruments revealed the emphasis that school districts placed upon the responsibilities imbedded within standards and against which principals' performance was evaluated. Table 1 illustrates the frequency analysis of evaluation instruments containing categories.

Category 1. Facilitation of vision. The ISLLC standards address facilitation of a vision focused upon high standards of learning where school leaders use assessment data to develop the school's mission, vision and goals. Analysis of evaluation instruments revealed that most school districts (70%) evaluated principals' performance in this area. Expectations of principals

Table 1.   Frequency analysis of ISLLC categories contained in the principal evaluation instruments

Category	Frequency count	Category per cent[a]
Facilitation of vision	70	70%
Instructional programme	90	90%
Organizational management	91	91%
Community relations	88	88%
Responsibility to the larger society	49	49%

[a]$n = 100$.

included: (a) establishing a mission and vision; (b) gathering, analysing and using data for decision-making; (c) using student needs assessment data in planning, organising and implementing the instructional programme.

Category 2. Instructional programme. Ninety per cent of the evaluation instruments analysed contained language reflective of the ISLLC standards addressing responsibilities related to the instructional programme. The standards emphasise the importance of educational leaders sustaining an instructional programme that promotes student learning and staff professional growth. School districts emphasised: (a) maintaining an atmosphere conducive to student learning; (b) retention of quality instructional and support personnel; (c) evaluation of teachers; (d) protection of instructional time; (e) staff development; (f) evaluation of the curriculum. Language related to staff and student learning encompassed the majority of the language that fell in this category.

Category 3. Responsibilities related to organizational management. The ISLLC standards incorporate several responsibilities within this category. These include fiscal management, facility management, school safety and security and other activities that promote organisational efficiency. This category is a significant area of emphasis for performance evaluation of Virginia principals. Ninety-one per cent of evaluation instruments contained language reflective of this category. Principals were evaluated according to their effectiveness in: (a) managing their school budgets; (b) accurate bookkeeping; (c) allocation of resources; (d) maintaining a safe and secure environment; (e) maintenance of facilities.

Category 4. Responsibilities related to community relations. This category represents the effectiveness with which a school principal collaborates with families and members of the community while responding to the diverse interests of the community. The majority of school districts in Virginia evaluated their principals' effectiveness in carrying out responsibilities related to this category. Eighty-eight per cent of the evaluation instruments analysed contained language addressing community relations. Principals were expected to: (a) promote effective communication with parents and other community members; (b) establish relationships with local community groups and individuals to solicit support of a diverse student population; (c) maintain an active partnership with business and industry; (d) foster effective home–school communication.

Category 5. Language that addressed responsibility to the larger society. Responsibilities addressed within the ISSLC standards include responding to and influencing political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts. Less than half of the evaluation instruments analysed (49%) included language reflective of this category. The evaluation instruments that did contain language related to this category primarily emphasized compliance with legal mandates. Principals were expected to evaluate staff as outlined in state law and interpret School Board, State Board of Education and Virginia School laws and regulations.

Emergent categories

Word frequency analysis did not reveal the emergence of additional language that was not already addressed within the previously described categories. Although additional language was not revealed in the analysis, one interesting phenomenon emerged. The Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Administrators, and Superintendents[2] were reflected in 35 of the evaluation instruments analysed. These standards were not incorporated in the original design of this study, but deserve mention because of the degree to which the evaluation instruments utilized language from these standards. Language in 35 evaluation instruments was an exact match to the language found in the guidelines.

State standards and evaluation instruments: comparative analysis

Principal evaluation instruments were analysed to determine the degree of reflection of instructional leadership and management attributes contained within these documents. Nine categories were derived from the SOA description of the role of a school principal. The process used to analyse evaluation instruments was identical to the process used to analyse job descriptions, where the basic unit of text for the content analysis was the theme. Table 2 illustrates the frequency analysis of SOA categories present in principal evaluation instruments.

Category 1. The principal's role as an enforcer of student conduct. Sixty-two per cent of the evaluation instruments analysed contained language expecting principals to enforce student conduct. School principals' performance expectations consistently included: (a) maintaining and ensuring appropri-

Table 2.   Frequency analysis of SOA categories contained in the principal evaluation instruments

	Frequency count		
SOA category	No. of evaluation instruments	No. of school districts[b]	Category per cent[a]
Enforcer of student conduct	62	54	62%
Test analyser	71	68	71%
Keeper of student records	4	4	4%
Instructional quality	91	86	91%
Student drop-out statistics	0	0	0%
Staff–parent communication	91	86	91%
Teacher training	15	13	15%
Budget	75	71	75%
Keeper of teacher licensure	3	2	3%

[a]$n = 100$ evaluation instruments.
[b]$n = 97$ school districts providing evaluation instruments.

ate student discipline; (b) understanding and applying current theories of behaviour management; (c) dealing with student discipline in a firm and fair manner; (d) clearly communicating expectations regarding student behaviour to students, parents and staff.

Category 2. Analysis of test data. Seventy-one per cent of principal evaluation instruments contained language that involved an analysis of data to support student achievement. Performance expectations included: (a) recognizing outstanding achievements by students; (b) analysing data to support decision-making; (c) gathering and analysing data on student academic achievement; (d) identifying of staff development needs based upon student achievement data.

Category 3. The principal as the keeper of student records. A very small proportion of the evaluation instruments analysed contained performance expectations that principals keep student records regarding placement, promotion and retention decisions. Four school districts' evaluation instruments, representing 4% of the evaluation instruments analysed, reflected such language. A majority of the language contained within the evaluation instruments expressed an expectation that principals would maintain records of student assignments that provided information related to student retention, promotion and placement decisions.

Category 4. Supervision and evaluation of instructional quality and instructional time. Analysis of principal evaluation instruments revealed that 91% of them reflected leadership and management attributes regarding instructional quality and time. The bulk of the language contained within the evaluation instruments addressed school improvement plans designed to improve student achievement. Performance responsibilities framed within evaluation instruments expected principals to evaluate the performance of teachers and other staff. Principals were expected to foster staff development based upon their performance evaluation of teachers and based upon analysis of student achievement data. School districts expected principals to plan for adequate instructional resources when developing school budgets and to ensure that instructional resources were disseminated to staff. Principals' performance was also judged according to their protection of instructional time from unnecessary interruptions and their budgeting of school time to provide for adequate instruction.

Category 5. Student drop-out statistics. Analysis of principal evaluation instruments produced no language reflective of maintaining records of students who dropped out of school. The Virginia accreditation standards expect principals to maintain records of students who dropped out of school, making a note of the reasons why students dropped out and documenting preventative actions taken by the school. Despite this requirement, no school districts evaluated principal performance according to this expectation.

Category 6. Staff and parent communication. The major focus of this language described performance expectations that principals foster

positive public relations and exhibit effective interpersonal relations skills. Other expectations included: (a) collaboration with staff, families and community resources; (b) provision of services to the district and community; (c) working with a diverse student population, families, school staff and the community; (d) encouraging community involvement in school; (e) facilitation of community use of school facilities; (f) involving parents and citizens in the evaluation of school programmes; (g) providing staff, students and parents with a school handbook and communicating and interpreting the policies and procedures contained within such handbooks.

Category 7. Teacher training. Fifteen per cent of the evaluation instruments analysed included language that addressed teacher training. Performance expectations of principals dealt primarily with the provision of staff development programmes based upon teacher needs or based upon programme evaluation results. Principals' evaluations expected them to coordinate district level staff development efforts with building-based[Q?] staff development efforts. In-service training was expected to promote continuous improvements in instructional methods. Furthermore, principals' evaluations expected them to involve their staff in planning in-service training based on the goals of the district and school and upon the needs of individual staff members.

Category 8. Maintaining a school budget. The SOA expect principals to maintain records of receipts and disbursement of monies and present these annually for audit. A large proportion of the evaluation instruments (75%) contained language that identified principal responsibilities related to maintaining a school budget. The primary emphasis for principals' performance expectations focused upon devising a school budget by determining needs and priorities, managing the allocation of fiscal resources and supervising the maintenance of accurate bookkeeping and accounting of school funds. Principals were expected to utilise all available funds and to collaborate with appropriate staff to determine budget needs and priorities. In addition, their performance is also assessed upon keeping staff informed regarding the status of budget requests.

Category 9. Keeping records of teacher licensure. Two school districts incorporated language into their evaluation instruments related to keeping records of teacher licensure. Little attention was devoted to this SOA requirement within school district evaluation instruments.

Emergent categories for evaluation instruments

Three categories emerged from the content analysis of evaluation instruments. An analysis of overall word frequency in principal evaluation instruments revealed the emergence of expectations of school principals with regard to three additional categories: (a) overall operations; (b) monitoring student attendance; (c) responsibilities related to transportation of students.

Table 3. Frequency analysis of emergent SOA categories contained in thr
principal evaluation instruments

Emergent category	Frequency count		Category per cent[a]
	No. of evaluation instruments	No. of school districts[b]	
Operations	32	24	32%
Student attendance	9	9	9%
Student transportation	9	7	9%

[a]$n = 100$ evaluation instruments.
[b]$n = 97$ school districts providing evaluation instruments.

Table 3 illustrates the frequency analysis of emergent categories contained within the principal evaluation instruments.

Overall operations. Thirty-two per cent of principal evaluation instruments incorporated language that addressed the performance expectations that principals maintain the proper care, cleanliness and attractiveness of buildings and grounds. They were also expected to manage the facilities and equipment and work with cafeteria personnel to ensure efficient delivery of services to students.

Monitoring of student attendance. Nine per cent of principal evaluation instruments included performance expectations that principals monitor the attendance, welfare and conduct of students. Principals were also expected to adhere to attendance policies in the administration of these duties.

Transportation of students. A small proportion (9%) of principal evaluation instruments assessed principals' performance responsibilities related to student transportation.

Discussion

The educational landscape is clearly different than it was 10, 20 or 30 years ago at the national, state and local levels. The National Association of Elementary School Principals epitomises this in the following quote:

> The business of schools has changed. Principals can no longer simply be administrators and managers. They must be leaders in improving instruction and student achievement. They must be the force that creates collaboration and cohesion around school learning goals and the commitment to achieve those goals. (National Association of Elementary School Principals 2001: 1)

Role responsibilities for school principals are changing rapidly. The accountability movement has substantially changed the focus of these responsibilities to a role focused upon instructional leadership (Franklin 2002). Principals find themselves accountable to policy-makers, parents and business leaders alike for the results in high stakes testing (No Child Left

Behind Act, 2001). The political pressure of high stakes accountability requires principals to improve instruction and student achievement while balancing the need to maintain facilities, supervise student conduct and manage budgets. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) asserted that standards are a catalyst for new thinking about the role of principal as leader and principal as manager (National Association of Elementary School Principals 2001: vi).

Time is a barrier for school principals, who find their day filled with interruptions that are not related to instruction (see, for example, Shellinger 2005, Buck 2006). More specifically, time requirements in terms of non-instructional duties of principals include dealing with discipline issues and working on custodial duties (Villani 1999). Moreover, principals working in stressful environments are prone to burnout (Queen and Schumacher 2006).

The principalship continues to change, with stakeholders demanding a greater voice in school decisions. In particular, the need to provide empowerment to parents, the business community and teachers must be balanced against the need to provide instructional leadership. These demands also make the principalship less attractive to potential new administrators (Moore 1999, Farrandino 2001).

It is incumbent upon public school districts to clearly communicate expected responsibilities to their principals. Evaluation instruments are powerful communication tools that serve to articulate the responsibilities deemed important for principals to execute. Evaluation instruments also communicate the intentions and values of the school districts that author them. Evaluation instruments also serve to document the level of effectiveness with which principals execute their job responsibilities. In this respect, evaluation instruments are powerful tools for influencing the behaviour of principals, reinforcing the adage 'what gets measured is what gets done'. Written documentation sends a powerful message to principals that their job security and advancement is dependent upon a judgement of their effectiveness in carrying out institutional goals.

This study has demonstrated that Virginia school districts invested a considerable amount of written language to the area of instructional quality and delivery. This implies that instructional leadership is a major focus of attention for school principals that is supported at the national, state and local levels. Principals should clearly understand that this is a major responsibility that they are expected to exercise and that their performance will be judged according to their effectiveness in this area. Principals should experience less role conflict and role strain, which should consequently improve their effectiveness as instructional leaders. The ultimate beneficiaries of this effectiveness are the students, school staff and larger society.

The study has also revealed that school districts hold many common expectations of their principals that align with both state and professional standards, but inconsistencies were present in evaluation instruments that could produce role conflict and subsequent role strain as principals strive to comprehend which expectations they should focus their attention upon. School districts would better support the work of principals by revising evaluation instruments to align with state standards in the areas of: (a)

keeping student records; (b) keeping drop-out statistics; (c) providing teacher training.

Emergent categories revealed additional responsibilities expected of school principals that were not incorporated in the SOA. School districts should encourage the Virginia State Department of Education to incorporate responsibilities into the SOA that accurately reflect the actual work that principals are expected to do. This is particularly true for the area of overall operations, which includes the maintenance and cleanliness of buildings and grounds. This was a significant job responsibility expected of Virginia principals.

The ISLLC developed national standards primarily as standards of effectiveness for school leaders. The vision of this nationwide consortium included the use of these standards as tools for assessment when awarding principal licensure and advanced certification (Green 2001). If the standards reflect valid dispositions for school leaders then the assumptions upon which they are based should be validated and tested (English 2003). If not, then an examination required for school administrator certification that is based on the standards would be inappropriate.

It is important to note the omission of language related to Standard 5 of the standards in principal evaluation instruments. Standard 5 establishes an expectation that principals will act with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner. Evaluation instruments formalize expectations of school principals. The lack of attention to these dispositions raises questions regarding institutional expectations of school principals in this area. Do school districts expect these behaviours from their principals in spite of the evidence that evaluation instruments lack language devoted to this area or does the lack of language in evaluation instruments related to these dispositions imply a lack of emphasis for school districts? Would incorporating language that reflects the expectations set forth in Standard 5 of the standards influence principals to exhibit these behaviours?

In conclusion, the results of this study have revealed that evaluation instruments emphasize both leadership and management responsibilities expected of school principals in Virginia. Strong alignment was evident for the ISLLC standards, which stress leadership roles. Some management responsibilities found within the Virginia SOA were congruent with evaluation instruments, while others were less congruent. We suggest that it would be prudent for school districts to align their principal evaluation instruments with both state and professional standards. This alignment would facilitate clearer communication to principals regarding expectations of responsibilities and their performance of those responsibilities. Moreover, this alignment should promote better job satisfaction and effectiveness for school principals by reducing role conflict and consequent role strain. However, national, state and local politics also influence the expectations of school principals. Overload is another factor that may influence the effectiveness with which a principal performs his responsibilities. It would also be wise for school districts to assess the number of responsibilities incorporated within their evaluation instruments. In a phrase, much is expected of the principal. Can a principal actually perform these responsibilities without them taking a toll on personal health and job satisfaction?

At the local level dealing with staff, parent and community demands may increase role strain and role conflict for principals (Piltch and Fredericks 2005). Providing leadership while effectively managing staff and facilities is very challenging. Lacking clear expectations and support, in addition to increased pressure to meet stakeholder expectations, are reasons that may cause principals to exit the profession (Johnson, 2005). In the final analysis, increased principal effectiveness serves students and communities as schools prepare students to advance to the world of adulthood. However, it would be remiss to leave out the fact that the increased emphasis on accountability has also seen a commensurate increase in the number of responsibilities expected of principals. Additionally, the use of a national examination based upon the ISLLC standards to determine certification for school leaders may present a narrow view of instructional leadership (Anderson 2002).

This study has raised several questions related to the many responsibilities experienced by school principals and how their performance is evaluated. Does the increase in leadership and management responsibilities and expectations correlate with greater or less job satisfaction for school principals? Are the state and national standards reflected in evaluation instruments based on tested and validated assumptions of what it means to be a school leader? Are principals actually evaluated according to the indicators in evaluation instruments or are other factors considered? Are all responsibilities weighed equally? What are the reasons for principal dismissal? Are principals exiting the profession due to current political and job demands? Do stakeholders understand the complexity of the role of a school principal? Does principal evaluation increase principals' effectiveness as school leaders and managers and is evaluation conducted fairly? Additional study would help to shed light on these important issues.

Note

1. A building principal overseas instruction and operation of an elementary, middle or high school.
2. In 2000 the state of Virginia developed proposed guidelines for uniform standards for evaluation of teachers, administrators and superintendents. The development of these guidelines was a response to the Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act of 1999. This resulted in the development of *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Administrators, and Superintendents* (Virginia Department of Education 2000).

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